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AUTHOR Mundie, Karen; Joyce, Michelle
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ABSTRACT

A project created a model for literacy councils that would allow them to form working partnerships with small businesses and provide instruction based on the needs of both the employer and the employee. Fifty employers received Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council (GPLC) program information by mail; 20 participated in a workplace survey. Three companies began a GPLC workplace program. Findings indicated most companies did not provide basic skills training. Only half of the employers felt they had a need for this kind of training. Cost was not a factor. Most hourly employees would like to improve their basic skills; math and spelling were most often mentioned. All the companies interviewed would prefer an outside provider to do basic skills training and most thought that linking small business training with literacy council services was a good idea. A model for creating a workplace program was designed that simplified the complex steps involved in creating a workplace program. It proposed that, for literacy councils to implement workplace programs successfully, they must do the following: know their resources; know the company's educational problems and concerns; form a support team with the company to work together on mutual educational goals; be a sensitive, creative, and flexible team player; provide high quality services; and document student progress in a way that is valuable to the company as well as the student. (Appendixes include survey results, sample cost determination, and magazine article about the survey.) (YLB)

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Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council

Finding the Missing Link: Expanding the Role of Literacy Councils in Workplace Education

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Final Report

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Finding the Missing Link: Expanding the Role of Literacy Councils In Workplace Education

Written by: Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council
Karen Mundie, Program Director
Michelle Joyce, Workplace Coordinator

Duration of Project: July 1,1993 - June 30,1994

Project Director: Michelle Joyce
Reading Specialist/Workplace Coordinator
Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council
100 Sheridan Square
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Funding: $10,000

Project Number: 98-4029

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Abstract

Title: Finding the Missing Link: Expanding the Role of Literacy Councils in Workplace Education

Project Number: 98-4029 **Funding:** $10,000

Project Director: Michelle Joyce **Phone:** (412) 661-7323

Contact Person: Michelle Joyce

Agency: Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council

Address: 100 Sheridan Square, Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Purpose: The purpose of this project was to create a model for literacy councils that will allow them to form working partnerships with small business and provide instruction based on the needs of both the employer and employees.

Procedures: Fifty employers received GPLC program information by mail. Twenty of those companies participated in a workplace survey. Three companies began a GPLC workplace program during the project year. The survey results, models for implementing programs, and recommendations are included in the final report.

Summary of Findings: Most companies do not provide basic skills training. Only half of the employers felt that they had a need for this kind of training. Employers would provide this training if they felt there was a need for it. Cost was not a factor. Most hourly employees would like to improve their basic skills. Math and spelling were most often mentioned. All the companies interviewed would prefer an outside provider to do basic skills training and most think that linking small business training with literacy council services is a good idea.

Comments: The three companies we worked with saw a need for basic skills instruction and considered it a priority. They contacted us based on the information we sent them.

Descriptors:

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Introduction

There are a approximately one hundred community-based literacy programs in Pennsylvania. Very few are active in workplace education. The primary purpose of this project was to demonstrate and give other programs an effective model for entry into this rapidly growing field.

This project is concerned with the partnership between small business and literacy councils. Small business defined as having 50 or fewer employees and the term "literacy council" referring to any non-profit literacy program including affiliates of Laubach Literacy Action (LLA), Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA), and independent councils.

Small business represents an ideal partner for a literacy council's services.

-Small companies cannot always afford the training programs provided by community colleges. Literacy councils cannot compete with community colleges but can provide educational services that teach and enhance basic skills.
-Smaller companies have a smaller staff with employees that often do more than one job, and need a broad range of skills. Literacy councils are experienced in training, teaching and adjusting curriculum to address both an individual's professional and personal goals.
-Most small businesses have time and scheduling limitations regarding training. Literacy councils have traditionally delivered service in a wide range of settings and times.
-Smaller businesses have limited funds and priorities. Literacy councils are mission rather than profit driven and are able to offer services with a very small "profit" margin.

If this partnership seems so natural then why are so few literacy councils involved in workplace education? The answer is that these councils have not answered basic questions about their mission in this area. Some questions have to do with matters of economics, delivery of service and identification of service needs. Other questions have to do with who literacy councils are and whom do they serve?

The purpose of this project was to create a model for literacy councils

that will allow them to form working partnerships with small business and provide instruction for employees that will ultimately serve the needs of both employers and employees. The objectives of this project were to provide literacy councils with a model that they could follow when researching, designing and implementing workplace programs for small businesses.

This project began in October, 1993 with the creation of mission statement. By January 1994 a survey for small businesses was created, and phone calls were made to employers on our mailing list. Fifty companies received information about GPLC's workplace programs. By July '94, twenty companies participated in the survey. This included 20 upper-management, 12 middle-management and 16 hourly employees. Two companies began a workplace program with GPLC during the project year and a third company will start a class in the fall of '94. Information for this report was compiled and evaluated for the final report in August 1994.

This project was conducted under the authority of Don Block, the executive director of Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council, and Karen Mundie, program director of Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council.
The project director was Michelle Joyce, reading specialist and workplace coordinator for Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council.
This project involved the cooperation of twenty companies in the Pittsburgh area.

This project was funded through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Literacy and Basic Education. Copies of this document can be obtained from AdvancE, the Bureau's Adult Literacy Resource Center:
AdvancE
PDE Resource Center
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Statement of the problem

According to a report done by the Southport Institute for Policy analysis entitled The Missing Link: Workplace Education in Small Business, only 3-5% of small businesses have any sort of workplace program and only 1-2% have an extensive one. Since roughly 57% of the American workforce is employed in small firms, there is clearly a large segment of the workforce with no easy access to the new information and new skills necessary to enhance immediate job performance or to promote career growth. Small firms often lack the resources to attract partner agencies such as community colleges and cannot afford to do the curriculum development necessary to conduct their own classes.

Literacy councils are mission rather than profit driven and they are able to offer educational services with a very small profit margin. They are experienced in training, teaching and designing curriculum to include both a student's personal and professional goals. Literacy councils have traditionally delivered service in a wide range of settings and times and are especially able to adapt to the space and time constraints of small companies.

There are approximately one hundred community-based literacy programs in Pennsylvania. Very few of these are active in workplace education. Why aren't literacy councils more involved in workplace education? It seems like a natural educational partnership, doesn't it? How can literacy councils get involved in workplace education and what is their mission? This report will attempt to answer these questions and serve as a model for other agencies to follow.

Goals and objectives

The purpose of this proposal was to create a model for literacy councils that will allow them to form working partnerships with small business.

The objectives of the project:
I. to provide a *model mission statement and plan of action* for literacy councils involved in workplace education.
II. to provide a *market research model* for councils that will
    a. allow councils to *acquaint themselves with the needs of local*

small businesses

b. serve to *inform businesses of resources* available to them.

III. to provide a complementary *market research model* that will allow councils to *balance the needs of workers will those of their employers.*

IV. to provide *a model for choosing workplace partners* that are a good match for a council's resources and philosophy.

Procedures employed to study and explore the problem.

I. Mission Statement

GPLC"s Mission Statement

The mission of Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council is to teach youth and adults basic reading, writing, and math skills so that they may reach their fullest potential in life and participate productively in their community.

We see our workplace program as an extension of this mission and a grassroots approach to the National Educational Goal of making *every adult literate and able to compete in the workforce.*

GPLC's Workplace Mission Statement:

The mission of GPLC's workplace education program is to make employers in our communities aware of our educational services and provide their employees with opportunities to improve their basic skills in reading, writing and math so that they can reach their potential, participate productively in their community, and remain competitive in the workforce.

Plan of Action

GPLC used this model to research and determine the needs and concerns of small business employers/employees.

Conducting A Workplace Survey to Find Out the Needs of Small Businesses

Literacy Council forms a workplace team

designs a workplace survey

contacts small business organization to get addresses and recommendations

mails information to local businesses

makes follow-up phone calls

makes appointments to conduct surveys

conducts surveys with each employer and a few of his employees

collects and compiles data from surveys

schedules appointments with employers who are interested in conducting classes

"support team" meets to design a workplace program

II. Market Research: Employer and Employee

GPLC contacted TEC/ Pennsylvania Small Business United and arranged a meeting with Eric Dean, Vice President of Human Resources, and the Director of Training and Education, Dottie Van Wormer. TEC / Small Business United is a private, non-profit, non-partisan association of small

businesses who have combined their experience, knowledge and energies to improve the business climate in which they operate. It has over 3,200 member businesses which includes over 65,000 employees. The basic purposes of TEC/Small Business United are to protect and promote the welfare of small business, provide a medium through which small business can contact, influence and interact with peers, articulate the need of small business before the White House, State and Local Legislature, and allow those engaged in small business to take common action for their mutual benefit.

Karen Mundie and Michelle Joyce had a meeting with Mr. Dean and Ms. Van Wormer on October 15, 1993, and the objectives and purpose of our survey was discussed. With the cooperation of Mr. Dean and Ms. Von Wormer, a list of employers and contact people that they thought would be interested in participating in the survey was created and faxed to us. We received this information on October 29, 1993. In addition to this resource, we contacted the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh to obtain a minority and woman-owned business directory and Renaissance Two Publications to get a Greater Pittsburgh Black Business Directory.

As of June 30, 1994, fifty small and medium sized businesses have received a folder of information from GPLC explaining our workplace program and our survey. The folder contained two handouts on the state of illiteracy in our country and in our community, a GPLC annual report, GPLC brochure, GPLC newsletter, a reprint of a news article about one of our successful workplace programs, a reprint of an article that appeared in Dynamic Business magazine describing this workplace survey, a business card and a personal letter inviting them to participate in the survey. Each mailing was followed by a personal phone call.

Twenty companies have participated in an interview. A total of twenty upper management, twelve middle management and sixteen hourly wage employees were interviewed at their worksites. A separate list of questions was created for each group. The surveys were conducted privately and lasted 15-20 minutes per person. Those employers or employees who wished to express other opinions or had questions during the interview were given extra time. In some cases, an employer offered a tour of the plant. The survey was conducted in an interview format so that the employers and employees could elaborate and feel free to comment and

ask questions during the interview. Copious notes were taken and participants were told that the information would remain anonymous and confidential. Each interviewee left the interview with a GPLC brochure and business card.

Survey results and notes were transferred to a computer disk and a progressive record was kept. (See Appendix.)

Three companies decided to conduct a workplace skills improvement class with GPLC as the educational provider.

Training-Management Survey

What types of training do you provide for your employees?
What types of training do you provide in basic skills?
Do you think you need to or should provide basic skills training?
Why is or isn't that important to you?

Funding

Would you pay for basic skills training?
If so, how much would you be willing to pay and for what services?
Would sharing the expenses with the educational provider encourage you to try a basic skills program?

Providers

What educational programs or providers have you tried in the past? (regarding Basic Skills only)
Were they as successful as you had hoped they would be?
Why or why not?
Would you be interested in having employees trained as tutors so that they could teach other employees?
Would you prefer an outside agency to teach basic skill classes?
What has kept you from looking to agencies like ours for help?

Practices

How long would you be willing to commit to an educational training program?
How would you want this agency to be accountable to you?
Would you prefer a class on-site or off-site?
Would the classes be scheduled on company's time employee's time or both?
Do you have an ESL population?
If yes, have you had any training specifically done for their needs?
Would you consider doing so?
Are you interested in finding out more about literacy providers in your area?
Do you think that linking small business training with literacy agencies is

a good idea?
Would you consider starting a class at this point in time? Why or why not?
What are your biggest obstacles or apprehensions?

Outcomes

What are your expectations regarding the success of a workplace class?
What would determine "success" for you?
Because literacy providers like ours often have limited funds, how do you think we should market our services to small businesses?

Training-Hourly Workers Survey

What types of training are available to you at this company?
Would you like to improve your basic reading,writing and math skills?
Do you think that this company should provide this kind of training?
Do you think that it is necessary for your job or the future of your job to improve or maintain these skills?

Funding

Should the company pay for these services?
If so, how much and for what services?
Would you be willing to contribute an hour of your personal time to the instructional time of the class if the company pays for the other hour?

Providers

Have you participated in any educational programs in the past?
Have you participated in any company training programs ?
In your opinion, were they successful? Why or why not?
Have you ever been trained by a fellow employee?
Was that successful?
How would you feel about having a person in management or supervision tutoring you or a small group on basic skills?
Would you like an outside agency to come in and conduct classes for your company?
Which would you prefer and why?
What do you consider to be the greatest deterrents to people participating in a workplace skills improvement class?

Practices

Would you attend a class that was offered once a week for two hours?
Would you prefer a class on-site or off-site?
How would you like the classes to be scheduled?
(on co. time, employee's time or both)
Would you like the class to run for 8-10 weeks at a time?
Do you have any non-English speaking employees here at this company?
Do they need to learn better communication skills?

Do you think that agencies like ours can help companies like yours improve the skills of their employees?

What would you like to learn most?
reading_____ math_____ writing_____ spelling_____
other_____

If we have a class on_____, would you be interested in attending?

Outcomes

What would you hope to accomplish in this class?
What do you think the company would hope to gain from having these classes for their employees?

III. Survey Results and Program Model

The survey results and our experience with the three workplace programs we developed during this project year helped us design a *Model for Creating a Workplace Program.* (See page 19.) This model simplifies the very complex steps involved in creating a workplace program. Here is a brief explanation of the model and some suggestions for its implementation.

Making contact with employers.....

Our survey showed that at least half of the employers we interviewed didn't think they had a literacy problem. Our recommendation is to send employers in your area information that would interest and educate them on the scope and spectrum of adult basic education. Include information on your workplace program and other training programs in your area. This would be good public relations for your literacy council and get the name of your council out there in the business community. Include a personal letter and encourage employers to contact you in the future if and when they perceive a problem.

What is your council's mission? What are its resources? What services can it deliver? What can it deliver if the employer is willing to negotiate with you on some things? .....

These are the questions your council needs to answer before that first meeting with the employer. As stated in the survey, most companies are willing to pay for some services and some things are negotiable. Don't promise anything you can't deliver. Start small and build your reputation on delivering quality service.

What members of your council will coordinate and commit themselves to this workplace program?.....

A workplace staff is necessary for a workplace program to succeed. A committed and responsible group of professional staff and volunteers acting as a team are important to the organization, implementation and success of this program.

Schedule a meeting .....

Schedule a meeting with an interested employer and ask him to invite those employees to the meeting that will have the greatest impact on the success of the class. Encourage him to get supervisors, union reps., and a few leaders among its hourly employees to attend the meeting. Members of the workplace staff should attend and explain your agency's services. Find out the employer's and employees' reasons for wanting a basic skills class.

***Should your agency** be the workplace provider for this company?.....*

"Don't promise anything you can't deliver." Start small and build your council's reputation on delivering quality service. Consider your agency's resources, capabilities and staff before making any commitment. If the company would be better served by another agency then recommend other agencies to them.

As a literacy council, we see ourselves as advocates for the employee. We can be selective about the partnerships we form and the companies we choose to collaborate with. Some, but not many, employers we surveyed wanted to see the actual test scores of their employees. If your agency feels uncomfortable with this or has reason to feel that this company may use these scores or any other information in a way that will negatively affect the students you're serving then it is your agency's decision as to whether it wants to be involved in this project. There are workplace programs that would be better served by other agencies.

Getting started.....

Most management employees felt that the biggest obstacles to overcome when promoting a skills development class were recruitment, scheduling, getting employees interested and keeping things confidential. Hourly employees felt that fear and embarrassment were the greatest deterrents to participation.

As adult educators trying to implement and create workplace programs, it is our responsibility to create approaches that will alleviate some of these problems. Building a support team in the company and getting them

to contribute to this educational endeavor is a necessary part of a successful workplace program.

We have found that individually interviewing all the employees in a company is one good way of introducing and presenting a workplace program as an advocate for all employees. In a fifteen minute interview with each employee an interviewer can answer questions about the class or tutoring sessions as well as personally invite employees to attend. For those employees that are inappropriate or too advanced for the program that is offered at the time, the interviewer can inform them of what class your agency will be conducting and ask them if they could act as a resource person for the class.

We had a sign-up sheet for Resource Volunteers available at the interview. Many upper management people volunteered to be resource people. A Resource Volunteer does not tutor but is available to the agency if they should need his expertise, knowledge or some other job-related information related to the workplace class.

Our agency has found this personal interview approach to be time consuming but well worth the effort because it helps to recruit students, builds a rapport with the employees, creates a presence in the company, gets people interested in the program, lessens the potential student's fears and concerns about confidentiality, and helps to remove some of the misconceptions people have about "literacy" education.

What about recruitment?.....

Giving a customer what he wants when he wants it is good business. Schedule a class at the best possible time and place for the people that you are trying to reach. Most employers in the survey did not mind having the class on some company time. For those employees that cannot attend a scheduled class, try to make other arrangements for them. This might involve using a workplace trained and experienced volunteer tutor in a one-to-one or small group tutoring session either on-site or off-site. Eight to ten week courses seemed agreeable to most people in the survey. It is easier for a busy adult student to commit himself to something for a brief period. Most people like choices and options. When first introducing a program it is easier to recruit people when they get "to try it out" for eight weeks and see if they like it. They can always sign up for other

classes in the future.

Schedule a class that employees have an interest in and give it a name that adults will respond to. A *Math Refresher Class, Improving Your Communication Skills Course or Skills Enhancement Program* are better names because that is what you are actually doing in the workplace class.

Math and spelling classes were most often mentioned in the survey. Offering a class that the employees want first is probably the best way to get students interested and enrolled in the class. If students have a good experience in the class and get over their initial fears and reservations it is much more likely that they will sign up for other classes in the future.

Assessment and Accountability

The survey results indicate that most employers will continue with a program if they see its benefits. Make sure the employer can see evidence of progress. It is your job as the provider to make him aware of the progress that has been made.

Accountability is important to everyone in the program. Your evaluations will measure everyone's success. **Written reports, class critiques, a group progress chart, questionaires for the supervisor, attendance reports, teacher made assessments, and portfolios** give feedback to everyone in the program.

Before the class begins, decide with the employer and employee what will be reported and what will be kept confidential so that everyone keeps their integrity.

Final Evaluation

Schedule a support team meeting at the end of a program. Bring student critiques and evaluations to the meeting. Let the team know how the students liked the class. Give the supervisors questionaires and ask if they have noticed improvement in the workplace.

This a time to prove to the team that the class was successful and that their time was well spent.

Discuss any future plans and improvements to the program.

Three Model Programs

GPLC designed and conducted basic skill classes for three companies during this project year. Two of these companies were new workplace sites for GPLC. These models show the diversity of approaches we have taken in our workplace program.

Model 1
We had 2 meetings with a 7 member team of management, middle management and hourly workers to discuss their company's educational needs and prepare a recruitment plan. The two GPLC instructors prepared a list of questions and personally interviewed all 114 employees of the company. All the employees interviewed received a brochure, business card, and a *free promotional pen* from GPLC as a *"thank you"* for taking the time to participate in the interview.

The interview was conducted by the instructors and provided the perfect opportunity for them to introduce themselves to the company's employees and to the potential student. The instructors were able to answer any questions about the agency or program. Everything was kept confidential. Every employee was asked if he wanted to improve his basic skills or saw a need for basic skills improvement in the company.

The interviews were scheduled by the employer at 15 minute intervals and took three days to complete. It took approximately 36 hours to do all the interviews and about 5 hours to compile the interview data. GPLC charged $30.00/hour for this service. The company received the results of the interviews in the form of a report.

The instructors conducted a math class for the first ten weeks because that's *what the employees wanted* and then conducted a reading and writing communications class the second ten weeks because that's *what the employer wanted.* GPLC did not charge for the actual instructional time of the class or for materials. Some of the cost was covered by a

Section 322 Workplace Grant.

The classes addressed both the employer's and employee's concerns, received favorable assessments from the team and students, and the classes at this site will continue next year.

Model 2

The Human Resource Director felt that the students would benefit from *one-to-one tutoring.* The students were very concerned about confidentiality. One student, that management actually wanted to promote to a management position, would not attend unless he had a one-to-one tutor. He did not want any of the people he worked with to know that he had a reading problem. GPLC managed to find a *volunteer tutor* with a teaching background that was able to tutor during the day. A team which included the director, the supervisor, adult educator, tutor and student was formed. With close supervision of the team, the tutoring was successful and will continue this coming year. *The Human Resource Director is thinking of offering a similar service through the company's training program. GPLC will be the provider.*

Model 3

One of the companies we met doing this survey has *recruited its own group of students* for a math refresher class that they would like to start in the fall. Our workplace staff had a meeting with the president and the safety supervisor. We reviewed the issues which we had discussed in the previous survey. A class for these students begins in September 1994.

Summary

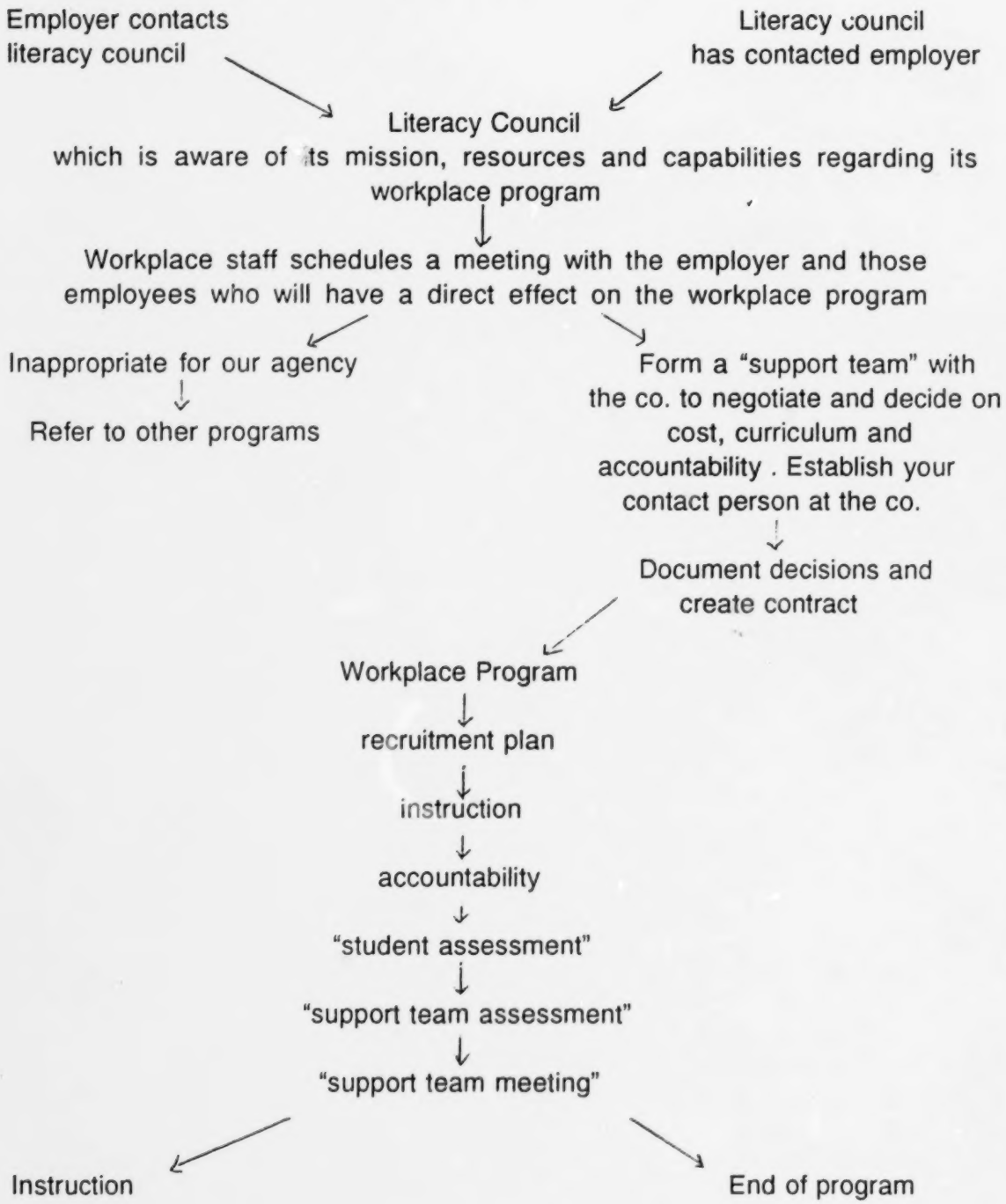
In order for literacy councils to successfully implement workplace programs they must know their resources, know the company's educational problems and concerns, form a support team with the company which will work together on mutual educational goals, be a sensitive, creative and flexible team player, provide quality services and document student progress in a way that is valuable to the company as well as the student.

Evaluation

Our plan was evaluated by the attainment of implementation benchmarks throughout the year.

These benchmarks as stated on the initial proposal, include the following:
-first month: mission statement in place
-fourth month: interview instruments in place and selection made of companies for personal interviews
-seventh month: interviews completed and documented
-ninth month: criteria for selection of partners and long range plan in place
-twelfth month: final report describing project ready for dissemination

Creating the Workplace Program


Employer contacts literacy council
Literacy council has contacted employer
Literacy Council
which is aware of its mission, resources and capabilities regarding its workplace program
Workplace staff schedules a meeting with the employer and those employees who will have a direct effect on the workplace program
Inappropriate for our agency
Refer to other programs
Form a "support team" with the co. to negotiate and decide on cost, curriculum and accountability . Establish your contact person at the co.
Document decisions and create contract
Workplace Program
recruitment plan
instruction
accountability
"student assessment"
"support team assessment"
"support team meeting"
Instruction
End of program

Appendix

I. Survey Results

II. Introductory Coverletter

III. Sample Cost Determination

IV. Magazine Article about Survey

Upper Management Results

Training

What types of training do you do for your employees?
All 20 upper management employees said that they had on the job training and/or in-house training for their employees.Tuition reimbursement is available to many employees.

What types of training do you provide in basic skills?
None of the companies had a basic skill class or classes for their employees except for the three that were already receiving services through GPLC and two that did some review along with their on the job training.

Do you think you need to or should provide basic skills training?
Yes=7
yes, in math=3
yes, if there is a need=2
no=7
no, they take a test to be hired=1

Why is or isn't that important to you?
Ten managers felt that basic skill training was not important because.....
Not a problem=6
Good hiring practices=4 mentioned this as a reason

Would you pay for basic skills training?
yes=14 (4 mentioned that they must see the need for it first)
no=5
not sure (1 felt that the cost was a factor)

If so, how much would you be willing to pay and for what services?
This question was not very specific and so the response I received was vague.
Most felt that the fee was negotiable depending on their needs.

Would sharing the expenses with the educational provider encourage you to try a basic skills program?
yes=10
no=10

(cost is not a factor=5)

What educational programs or providers have you tried in the past? (regarding Basis Skills only)
ACLD=1
GPLC=3
in-house=2

Were they as successful as you hoped they would be? Why or why not?
yes=4
no=2

Do you or have you used employees for training? Is or was that successful in your opinion? Why or why not?
yes=19
both=1

Would you be interested in having employees trained as tutors so that they could teach other employees the basic skills?
no=20

Would you prefer an outside agency to teach basic skill classes?
yes (if they had to choose)= 18
no=1
not interested=1

What has kept you from looking to agencies like ours for help?
no need for it=10
lack of awareness of providers=4
the preparation involved=3
sudden need for it=2
not our concern=1

How long would you be willing to commit to an educational program?
ongoing as nec.=6
on personal time only=7
depends on success=2
certain time period=3

not at all=2

How would you want this agency to be accountable to you?
job skill improvements=6
attendance to class=4
formal assessments=4
list of accomplishments=2
interview-2

Would you prefer a class on or off-site?
on-site=8
on-site if preferred=1
off-site (lack of space)=4

Would the classes be on company's time, employee's time or both?
shared=11
co. time=1
on personal time=1

Do you have an ESL population?
yes=2

If yes, have you had any training specifically done for their needs?
no=2

Would you consider doing so?
yes=1
no=1

Are you interested in finding out more about literacy providers in your area?
yes=10
no=9
not at this time=1

Do you think that linking small business training with literacy agencies is a good idea?
yes=17
no (the schools should do their job)=2
not nec.=1

Would you consider starting a class at this time?
yes=5
yes, in the fall=1
yes, but we are not located near any of your providers=1
yes, but we need to think about the skills that need addressed=1
no=9
no,we are too busy right now=2
need to think about how to implement and recruit=1

What are your biggest obstacles and apprehensions?
participation=4
confidentiality=2
expectations=1
waste of time=2
scheduling=1
recruitment=1

What are your expectations regarding the success of a workplace class? What would determine "success" for you?
self-esteem=4
positive feedback=4
job performance=3
communication skills=2
know basic skills =2
improved morale=1
continue education=1
better production=1
team player=1

Because literacy providers like ours often have limited funds, how do you think we should market our services to small businesses? (Random Order)

contact the human resource person or personnel departments and follow up with a mailed brochure that they can have as a reference
contact the businesses in your community and conduct management seminars
publish some success stories in a company's monthly newsletter
send speakers to local organizations and companies

certified public accountants have lots of contacts
send flyer, make a phone call and meet with personnel
when approaching companies, make them see the value of what you are doing and how you can help them add to their company's productivity
attend business conferences and set up a booth
send out a simple survey and include a brochure
radio announcements during radio shows that are popular with the professional audience
network with your own volunteers
approach union representatives
news articles in magazines and publications
flyers to the contact person in all companies
Pgh. Personnel Association Network has seminars and monthly meetings
publicize in whatever way you can afford it on a regular basis

Middle Management Results

Training

What types of training are available to you at this company?
All 12 employees mentioned some type of on the job training and some mentioned tuition reimbursement.

What types of training do you provide in basic skills?
none=10
GPLC=1
informal on the job=1

Do you think you need to or should provide basic skills training?
yes=11
no=1

Why is or isn't this important to you?
use it and need to know it=7
competition and accuracy=2
saves time=1
confident workers=1
not a problem=1
public schools should do their jobs=1

Funding

Would you pay for basic skills training?
yes=10
no=2

If so how much would you be willing to pay and for what services?
Yes= 2 75% of the cost
$500 per employee
Negotiable=10

Would sharing the costs with an educational provider encourage you to try a basic skills program?
yes=11

no=1

Providers

What educational programs have you tried in the past?
a variety of in-house, programs seminars=5
vocational schools=2
GPLC=1
community college=1
none=3

Were they as successful as you had hoped?
Why or why not?
yes=8
yes, on the job=-1
no=1

Do you or have you used employees for training?
yes=11
no, not in a formal way=1

Is or was that successful in your opinion? Why or why not?
yes=8
yes,when supervisors train=1
yes, in some cases=1
no, personality conflicts=1
it depends on the teaching ability=1

Would you be interested in having employees trained as tutors so they could teach other employees?
no=11
no, but they could help=1

Would you prefer an outside agency to teach basic skills classes?
yes=12

What has kept you from looking to outside agencies like ours for help?
priorities=3
not a problem=3

time=3
confidentiality=2
scheduling=1

Practices

How long would you be willing to commit to an educational training program?
as long as it was beneficial=5
as long as necessary=2
as long as there was interest=1
ongoing=1
one year=1
on employee's personal time=1
DK=1

How would you want this agency to be accountable to you?
a program report of some kind=6
tests/assessments=4
attendance=4
employee evaluation/feedback=3
noticeable improvement on the job=1

Would you prefer a class on or off-site?
on-site=7
off-site=4
NA=1

Would the classes be scheduled on company time, employees' time or both?
both=7
personal time=4
company time=1

Do you have an ESL population?
no=10
yes=2

If yes, have you had any training specifically done for their needs?
no=2

Would you consider doing so?

yes=1
not sure, because most of the people are over 50=1

Are you interested in finding out more about literacy providers in you area?
yes=7
no=5

Do you think that linking small business basic skills training with literacy agencies is a good idea?
yes=11
this is something employees should do on their own time=1

Would you consider starting a class at this point? Why or why not?
yes=1
yes, but it would have to get the "ok" from other people=1
yes, soon=1
we have a class now=1
no, too busy=2
not at this time=1
not my decision=1
no, not necessary=4

What are your biggest obstacles or apprehensions?
overcoming apathy=3
scheduling=3
participation=2
suspicion=2
time waster=2
confidentiality=1
funding=1

Outcomes

What are your expectations regarding the success of a workplace class?
better job performance/mastery of basic skills=11
self esteem/morale=5
continue education=2
positive feedback=1

Because literacy providers like ours often have limited funds, how do you think we should market our services to small businesses?
(Random Order)

mail flyer and then phone
get rid of the word "literacy"
mail and phone
word of mouth
send speakers to small manufacturer's meetings, contact local officials and make them aware of your services
keep promoting it
contact union representatives, and through word of mouth
word of mouth, other businesses promoting you in news articles or letters
get to management with a flyer, circulate them
public service announcement, creative ad scheme
contact the right person at the company

Hourly Workers

Training

What types of training are available to you at this company?
On the job training, tuition reimbursement, and seminars were mentioned by most employees. Only one said that there was no training available to him.

Would you like to improve your basic reading, writing and math skills?
all areas=10
math=4
reading=2
spelling=2
writing=3

Do you think that this company should provide this kind of training?
yes=15
no=1

Do you think it is necessary for your job or the future of your job to improve or maintain these skills?
yes=15
no=1

Should the company pay for these services?
yes=12
no=4

Would you be willing to contribute an hour of your personal time to the instructional time of the class if the company pays for the other hour?
yes=14
no=2

Have you participated in any educational programs?
yes=12
no=4

Have you participated in any company training programs?
yes=15

no=1

In your opinion, were they successful?
yes=11
no=3
not sure=2

Have you been trained by a fellow employee?
yes=16

Was that successful?
yes=11
depends on who is training you=5

How would you feel about having a person in management or supervision tutoring you or a small group in basic skills?
okay=1
yes, it would depend on who it was=2
no=13

Would you like an outside agency to come in and conduct basic skill classes for your company?
yes=14
no=2

Which would you prefer and why?
outside=13
it would depend on how technical=1
whichever is more appropriate=1
NA=1

What do you consider to be the greatest deterrants to people participating in a workplace skills improvement class?
embarrassment and fear=10
time=5
class content and relevance=3
apathy=3
expense=1
other responsibilities=1

not being paid for it=1

Would you attend a class that was offered once a week for two hours?
yes=10
yes, if it was at the right time=1
not sure=2
no=3

Would you prefer a class on or off-site?
on-site=12
convenience=3
NA=1

How would you like the classes to be scheduled?
on co. time only=6
co. time /personal time=11
personal time=1

Would you like the classes to run for 8-10 weeks at a time?
yes=9
more=3
less=2
DK=2

Do you have any non-English speaking employees at this company?
Do they need to learn better communication skills?
Yes=2
no=14

Do you think that agencies like ours can help companies like yours improve the skills of their employees?
yes=14
not sure=1
no=1

What would you like to learn the most?
math=7
spelling=5
reading=3
writing=3

all areas=3
NA=3

If we had a class on _____ , would you be interested in attending?
yes=10
DK/ no=6

What would you hope to accomplish in this class?
feel better about myself, more confident=3
improve my skills=3
writing improvement=2
math improvement=3
DK/NA=5

What do you think the company would hope to gain from having these classes for their employees?
good work/fewer mistakes=9
informed, skilled and well-rounded=6
self-directed=3
increased productivity=2
communication improved=1
creative=1

January 7, 1994

1~
2~
3~
4~
5~
6~
Dear 7~

Did you know that 212,000 adults in Allegheny county do not have a high school diploma? Did you know that 69,000 of them have less than a ninth grade education? How many of your employees have literacy problems that are going undetected by you but affect your company's productivity and growth?

Are you interested in improving the math, reading and writing skills of your employees so that your company can remain competitive in the world marketplace? If you are, then we can help you. Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council has run successful programs for area companies such as Melampy Manufacturing Co., Inc. in Gibsonia, PA, Pitt Metals and Chemicals, Inc. in McDonald, PA, and others.

We are interested in helping you, too, but first we need to talk with you about your needs and answer your questions about workplace education programs. Many employers are concerned about the following:

How do you introduce a workplace skills program?
How do you determine who needs the help?
What about confidentiality?
How do you motivate people to attend the classes?
How do you measure success?
What is it going to cost us?

As the area's largest literacy education agency, we feel it is our responsibility to inform you of the educational services that are available to you at little or no cost. I would like to meet with you and discuss your training needs and find out how agencies like ours can help small businesses like yours.

I will be calling you soon to arrange an appointment. Please share a few minutes of your time to answer some questions that may improve your company's future.

Sincerely,

Michelle Joyce
Workplace Coordinator

Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council

Cost determination for basic skills class

A. Instructional hours. Multiply teacher's hourly wage ($15.00) by the number of hours per term (48 hours).

B. Preparation time. Multiply teacher's hourly wage by 1/2 the number of instructional hours. ($15.00 x 24)
Note: Teachers need one hour of preparation for every two hours of teaching.

C. Curriculum development. This comes into play if our agency is hired to develop an entirely new curriculum.

D. Initial student assessment. (Billed separately)

E. Fringe benefits. Determine the actual cost of benefits for a part-time teacher. (13% x $1,080)

F. Instructional materials. $20 per student x 15

G. Evaluation and reporting. Cost of post-testing and final reporting if not included above.

H. Teacher aide, if used.

I. Administrative costs. Add lines A, B, G, and H. Multiply total by .20 (20%)

TOTAL .....

DB FEATURE

Literacy Council Looking into Workplace Programs

by Karen Mundie
Program Director
Greater Pittsburgh
Literacy Council

Even many professionals in adult literacy were astonished by the results of the National Adult Literacy Survey which were recently issued by the U.S. Department of Education. The report showed that nearly half of adult Americans are unable to read or solve math problems at the basic level of literacy as defined by a national panel of experts: using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.

The importance of this problem for business is obvious. To be competitive in today's market, business needs a flexible work force in which workers are able to work in teams and to monitor their own work. Workers who do not have the skills to participate in quality assurance initiatives are at a disadvantage. They are often unable to perform their jobs to specification and so are particularly at risk in any downsizing. For both management and labor, then, workplace literacy programs especially designed to enable workers to gain more sophisticated reading, writing and math skills could be extremely valuable.

To establish how such workplace literacy programs could best be implemented, Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council (GPLC) has begun a research project that will survey both managers and employees of twenty-five small businesses. The focus on small business is due to a recent report issued by the Southport Institute for Policy Analysis, which demonstrated that employees who work for very small businesses are especially poorly served, because small businesses are less able to bear the cost of training programs. According to the report, only 3-5 percent of small businesses have any sort of workplace program and only 1-2 percent have an extensive one. GPLC's survey will try to establish whether small businesses in the Pittsburgh area reflect national trends.

GPLC believes that most managers have heard about the national campaign to improve the skills of the American workforce (Workforce 2000) and that most managers would like to help employees to further their education in order to enhance productivity. Many are also sincerely concerned with their employees' future employment security as well as in their personal well-being.

But many questions remain. How much information do managers of small businesses in the Pittsburgh area have about the range of workplace education programs? What kinds of programs do they believe would be beneficial to their companies? How much of their own resources are they willing to invest in employee education programs? How much are the workers themselves willing to invest in order to improve their basic skills or their job-related skills? What, in short, are the perceived and actual barriers in the way of establishing workplace education and training programs?

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Designing an effective workplace literacy program depends on the answers to these questions. Indeed, a recent article in the Business Council for Effective Literacy newsletter has shown that two of the major barriers to establishing workplace literacy programs in small businesses are that small firms don't have enough information to know whether a program would be really valuable and the majority of small businesses don't know where to turn for help. Some of this uncertainty surely arises from questions about the costs of a workplace education program relative to its benefits. The question of worker participation is also important. No employer wants to lower employee morale, so the workplace skills program must be perceived as an opportunity rather than an unwanted intrusion.

Even if the need for a program can be established and the workers are willing to participate, there is a second barrier: finding instructors and a teaching site. If the Business Council for Effective Literacy is correct, most managers do not know enough about the local education providers to choose workplace partners who would be both affordable and effective. Establishing some criteria to match providers, types of programs, and workplace sites will be an important part of the GPLC study.

The GPLC survey is being carried out over a three-month period. Both workers and management will be interviewed to determine the current level of information about the various types of workplace education programs, to give information where it is needed, and to see what kind of program each would prefer. The questionnaire for the workers will include essentially the same questions as that for the employers, but from a different point of view. This information will be compiled, analyzed, and returned to all those participating in the survey, and will also be made available to local educators to aid them in planning and marketing programs.

If your company wishes to participate in this survey, please contact Michelle Joyce at 661-7323. GPLC would very much appreciate your involvement in this project.

Editor's Note: *Karen Mundie is program director at the Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council.*

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